

CONFERENCE ON ASIA AND THE CHANGING WORLD ORDER, TOKYO

Dr M: Make our region a major centre

IT is now time for all of East Asia to launch a process whose **final destination** is a zone of co-operative peace and prosperity stretching from Jakarta to Tokyo, **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said yesterday.

"There are those who say that 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'," he remarked in his speech at the Asia Society Conference on "Asia and the changing world order".

"Most of us in East Asia believe in the 'kaizen' principle; that improvement should come not with one

Dr. M - oversee
great leap but by continuous little steps."

The Prime Minister said East Asian countries had a legitimate right to want their region to be a zone of sustained co-operative peace and prosperity.

"If this will take a hundred years, the sooner we start the better, and it is best to start in the most propitious of circumstances."

He noted that the strategic circumstances of East Asia were better now than at any time in the last centu-

ry and a half. He said: "Peace is best made when there is peace. It is too late otherwise."

"Prosperity is best striven for when there is prosperity. It is too late when nations have their backs to the wall."

"And we must make our East Asian peace and prosperity together."

Dr Mahathir said East Asian countries must begin their long journey with small, pragmatic and productive steps.

He believed that the immediate need was for East

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Asia to do two things.

First, they must take advantage of the regional synergies and opportunities for co-operation to maximise the short, medium and long-term mutual economic advancement of the region.

Second, they must build a productive coalition for the success of the Uruguay round of GATT talks on multilateral trade, for the sustenance of the open multilateral global trading system and for other non-trade goals.

Earlier in his speech, Dr

Mahathir noted that the greatest civilisations began in Asia.

For almost three millennium, Eastern, Central and West Asian civilisations dominated the world. Then came the usual decline, followed by the ascendancy of Europe.

"We may not again be the centre of the world," he said, "but at least we should be the centre of our world."

"We must ensure that the history of East Asia will be made in East Asia, for East Asia and by East Asians."